



2011 Annual Conference of the Arab Forum for Environment & Development
Beirut, 27-28 October 2011

Recommendations

The Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED) held its fourth annual conference in Beirut on 27-28 October 2011, dedicated to discussing the transition to a green economy in the Arab world. The conference, held under the patronage of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Lebanon General Michel Sleiman, has brought together 500 delegates from 46 countries, representing corporations, nongovernmental organizations, academia, research institutions, and media organizations. Ministers and representatives of governments and international institutions have participated as observers. At the conference, delegates deliberated the findings and recommendations of the AFED report, *Green Economy in a Changing Arab World*, which advocates development patterns that achieve balanced progress across the economic, social, and environmental dimensions, while sustaining natural capital. The report communicates a set of enabling policies for making a transition to a green economy across eight key economic sectors (Agriculture, Water, Energy, Industry, Transport, Cities and Buildings, Waste Management, Industry) in a manner that achieves economic growth, social development, and environmental protection.

The conference endorsed the following conclusions and recommendations:

- 1) The conference agrees with the AFED report that forward-looking Arab economic development models need to meet people's aspirations in economic security, social equity, resource efficiency, and environmental protection. The findings of the report indicate that deterioration in economic, social, and environmental conditions has generated systemic strain on livelihoods, health, and human wellbeing, and may even lead to more social and political turmoil. The conference also agrees that the strategy of pursuing fast growth in gross domestic product (GDP) while neglecting or undermining sociopolitical and environmental conditions, needs to be fundamentally reconsidered.
- 2) To achieve the transformation to a green economy, public and private investments should be directed at maximizing resource efficiency and productivity of energy and water, reducing waste and pollution, securing new growth engines through research and development of green technology, and the sustainable management of local, natural, and cultural assets that boost the local economy and the capacity to create jobs and support the poor. Transitioning to green economy also helps Arab countries to adapt to climate change.
- 3) The conference calls upon Arab governments to:
 - a) Allocate a higher priority to environmentally-sustainable agriculture and rural development as a strategic policy objective to achieve food security, alleviate rural poverty, and reverse years of

neglect. Agricultural strategies should be focused on maintaining the sustainability of surface and ground water, improving irrigation efficiency, raising the productivity of rain-fed crops, facilitating trade in agricultural commodities, supporting eco-agricultural methods protective of soils, land, and water, and increasing agricultural investments for development, rehabilitation, and research.

- b) Introduce a policy shift towards water demand management that would regulate water access, improve water use efficiency, and prevent water pollution. Governments are urged to introduce fair water tariffs that rationalize water use, achieve cost recovery in a gradual manner to reflect actual value of the water resource, and promote equity through targeted subsidies. Wastewater treatment rates should be increased from the current figure below 50% to over 90% and water reuse from the current 20% to almost 100%. Development and utilization of innovative desalination methods that primarily use solar energy should be actively promoted.
- c) Adopt national and regional strategies for energy efficiency, demand-side management, cleaner energy, and renewable energy. To manage energy demand growth cost-effectively, governments should mandate and enforce energy efficiency standards and labels in residential and commercial buildings, industrial facilities, modes of transportation, and for electrical appliances and lighting. Governments should also reconsider broad electricity, petrol, and natural gas subsidies to take into account economic incentives that spur investments in energy efficiency, clean energy, and renewable energy technologies. Targeted subsidies should be used to assist low-income households.
- d) Introduce municipal zoning regulations that promote mixed-use development, high-density land use patterns, open green spaces, and accessible public transportation networks.
- e) Develop a national industrial policy that provides appropriate and favorable institutional and regulatory framework for low-carbon and resource-efficient industries and research and development (R&D) capabilities.
- f) Make sustained investments in mass public transportation in Arab cities and in regional rail lines to transport freight and people within busy corridors, locally, nationally, and regionally. Government agencies should ensure that transportation and urban planning are well integrated. Governments should adopt national fuel efficiency standards for vehicles and reduce in a gradual manner vehicle fuel subsidies, while introducing incentives for the replacement of ageing, polluting vehicles with new higher fuel efficiency vehicles, and applying a taxation system proportionate to emissions and fuel consumption.
- g) Adopt a resource management approach to solid waste that seeks to capture value from waste materials through reduction, reuse, recycling, and recovery. Governments should promote investments in converting organic food waste into compost and biogas, as well as waste-to-energy strategies.
- h) Develop a package of policy instruments, including regulations, incentives, and capacity building to implement sustainable tourism practices in travel, hospitality, and recreational services. Government should give particular attention to ecotourism as well as community-based cultural tourism to help in nature conservation and to support local economies.
- i) Promote, through a mix of economic incentives and publicly sponsored research programs, opportunities for the private sector to assist in developing locally-based competitive green technology as an economic engine for growth.

- j) Support academic institutions and research centers to create and enhance environmental programs and research studies that can play a major role in the transition to a green economy.
 - k) Commit to re-education of the workforce to develop the knowledge base for implementing green initiatives and to build innovative capacity within the local supply chains to meet the demand for green materials, technologies, and services.
 - l) Strengthen the institutional capacity of national government agencies, municipal councils, and local governments to mandate and enforce efficiency codes, standards, labels, and regulations, and to develop effective economic public incentives that enable green transformation in all sectors.
 - m) Launch sustained public awareness campaigns to cultivate understanding of the green economy and motivate behavioral changes in consuming, purchasing, and investment patterns.
 - n) Civil society, including non-governmental organizations, academia, and private sector groups should be included in green economy planning and transformation.
- 4) The conference calls upon regional organizations and governments to activate the Arab Environment Facility and establish regional green economy initiatives, covering: Research and Development, Renewable Energy Solutions, Sustainable Communities, Cleaner Production, Sustainable Agriculture, Regional Transport Networks.
 - 5) The conference calls upon development funds and the banking sector to increase resources to develop and implement green economy initiatives, and facilitate access to these resources.
 - 6) The conference recommends that AFED provide technical assistance to various sectors in Arab countries to transition to a green economy upon request. This may be in the form of seminars, training, policy design, and implementation of pilot projects on the ground.
 - 7) The conference calls upon private industrial enterprises to deploy the most efficient production technologies in new plants and retrofitting energy efficiency equipment in existing plants where it is economically viable, in order to maximize the resource productivity of energy, water, and materials and minimize pollution. Industrial companies are also urged to invest in distributed solar and wind power generation on-site when appropriate.
 - 8) The conference calls upon private developers and regionally based professionals in architecture, construction, building materials, and engineering to increasingly accord energy and water efficiency a high priority and make use of green solutions in buildings. Additionally, they are urged to apply traditional design approaches in Arab architecture that are known to be more responsive to local environmental elements and to indigenous cultural and aesthetic values.
 - 9) The conference calls upon real estate developers, commercial building owners, and large resort enterprises to accord energy and water efficiency a high priority in the design and operation of buildings and hotels and to take advantage of the economic viability of solar water heating.
 - 10) The conference calls upon non-governmental organizations, academia, and the private sector to cooperate fully in the implementation of these recommendations.

The conference wishes to thank the Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED) for its constructive initiative of promoting an Arab green economy, and requests it to present the

recommendations to all Arab governments and other stakeholders, and to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20.

The conference invites the AFED Board of Trustees to consider means of following up the implementation of the annual conferences' recommendations, and to present the outcome at AFED's fifth annual conference.

The conference expresses its gratitude to the Lebanese government for hosting the event. It offers its appreciation to all sponsors for lending their support for the convening of this conference.